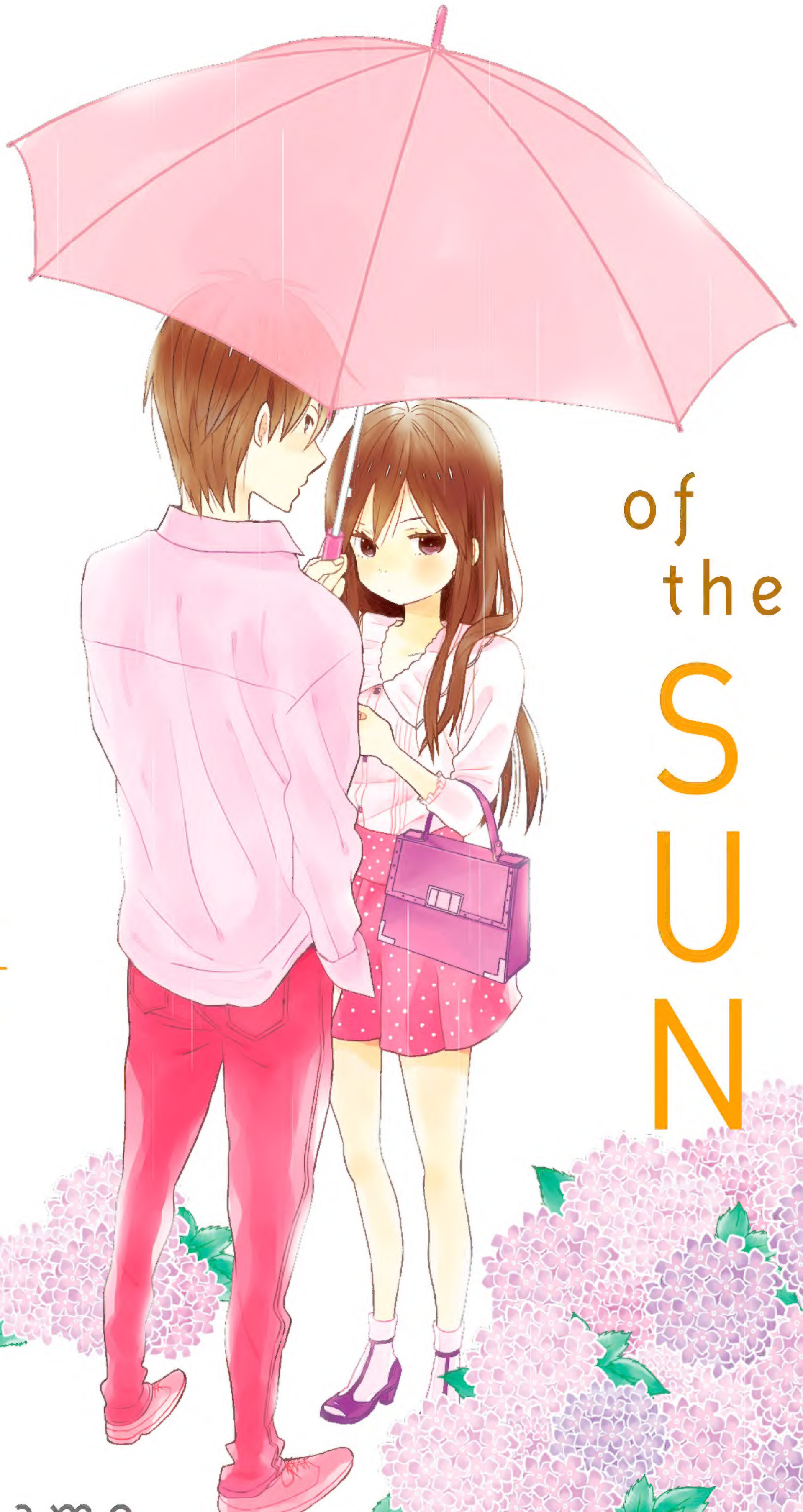
HOUSE of the SUN

6

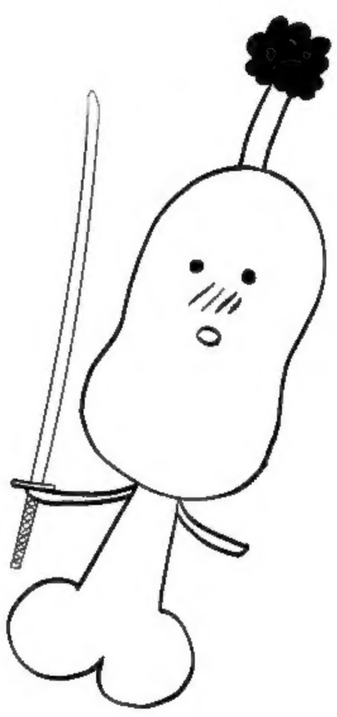


Taamo

HOUSE of the SUN

6

by Taamo



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CHARACTER

Roommates

Mao Motomiya

Second-year high school student. Without a place to call home, Mao moves into Hiro's house. Mao is secretly writing an online autobiography.

Hiro Nakamura

Businessman with housewife tendencies. Mao's childhood friend. He's been working to protect their home ever since his parents died in his third year of high school. He's watching over the house, hoping to once again live with his sister and brother.

Friends

Class-mates

Co-workers

Brothers

Chi-chan (Chihiro)

Mao's friend. She likes Oda-kun and confessed to him, but...

Oda-kun

Mao's classmate since first year. Had a thing for Mao, but was rejected and is heartbroken.

Sugimoto-san

Hiro's coworker. She's a fan of Mao's novel. Her nickname is "Radical." She likes Hiro.

Daiki Nakamura

Hiro's little brother. In his second year of high school. He moved in with an uncle after their parents died, but he has decided to return to the Nakamura house.

STORY

After her father gets remarried, Mao feels like she no longer has a home. Aiming for independence, she is now staying with her childhood friend Hiro. Hiro is kind and takes good care of her, and she begins to fall for him.

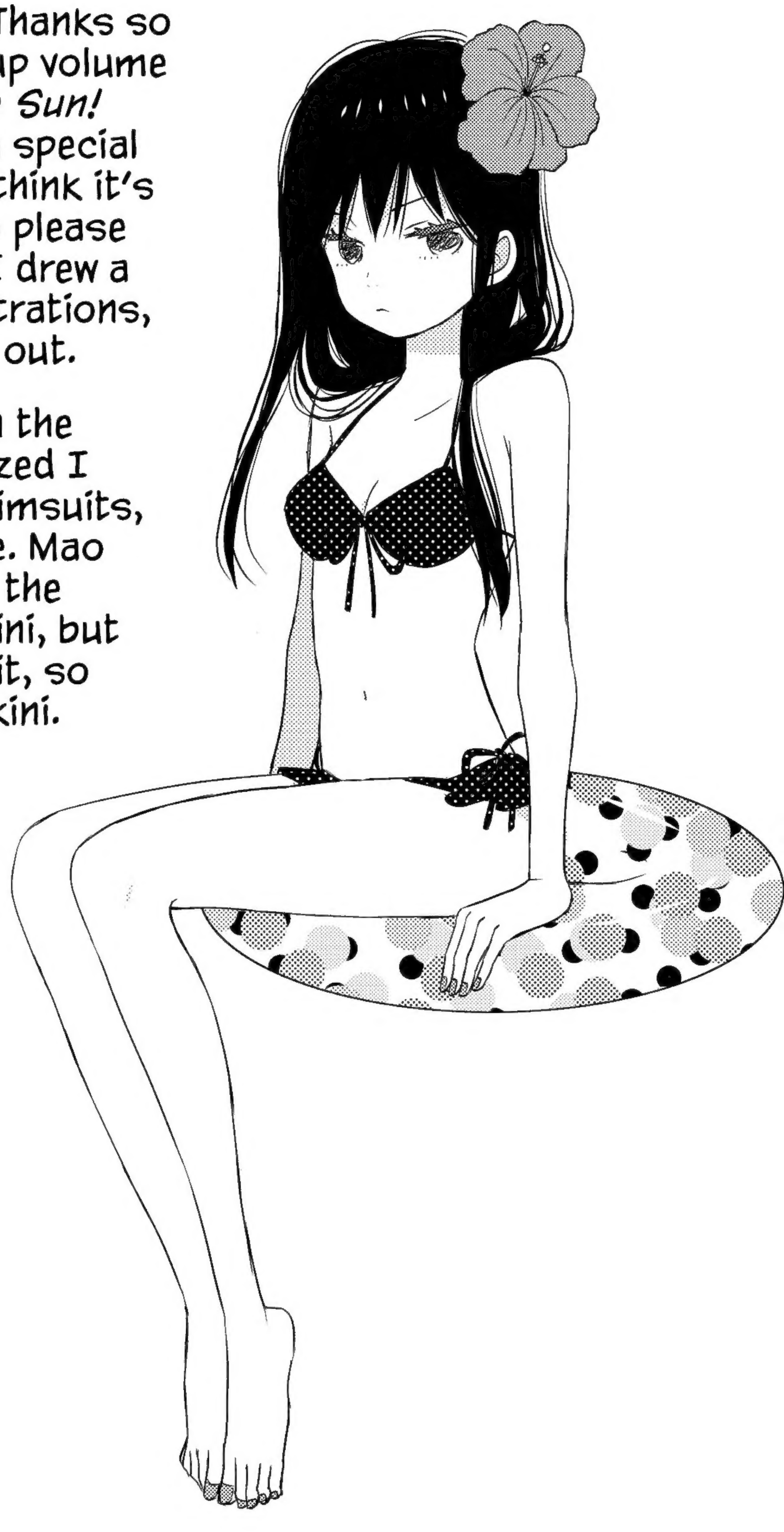
Mao sees Chi-chan struggling with her one-sided romance with Oda-kun and Oda-kun's straightforward affection for her. This gives her the courage to begin to face her own feelings as well as those of other people.

Yet even as the distance between her and Hiro begins to close, the day that Daiki is set to move back into the Nakamura house draws ever nearer...!

story 21 That Girl Over There

Hello, it's Taamo. Thanks so much for picking up volume 6 of *House of the Sun!* This time there's a special edition, as well! I think it's really well done, so please take a look at it! I drew a lot of special illustrations, so please check it out.

Summer is over in the comic, but I realized I never drew any swimsuits, so I drew this one. Mao doesn't seem like the type to wear a bikini, but I wanted to draw it, so here she is in a bikini.



...there she was.

Somehow, without warning...

Little, shrimpy Mao.

100

98

100

TA-DAH

Yeah, but this is a piece of cake.

You're smart as ever!

That's great, Nakamura!

You don't need to go to cram school to get grades like these.

Do you go to cram school?

You just have to pay attention in class, that's all.

I win!

Hmph.

95

Hmm.

95

89

Who's that? I'm Mao.

Magyo! What'd you get?

Whatever, lemme see.

Nakamura wins!

You're a sore loser.

You're a sore loser!

There's just nothing else to do at my house.

Not like I was competing with you.

What? How dare you ignore us!

無視

IGNORE

But y'know...

Mao is always a jerk like that.

But I'm the one who decides if we ignore her, so shut it.

CLATTER
ガタッ
ガタッ
CLATTER

That Motomiya makes me mad!

Let's ignore her back!

Her hair's pretty cute today.

I like the ribbon.

Yeah.

Yeah.

It looks good on her.

She was cute.

What?

There's nothing cute about that little shrimp!

What're you, blind?!

What ...?

Y'know.

What're you two talking about?

...

イラッ

GRR

...

Shut up! You don't have to say it twice!

Because you suck.

You're really bad.

I'm done. This is no fun.

It's Mao!

One more time, Magyo!

You're not staying for dinner?

Nah.

SNIFF SNIFF

See, it's almost dinnertime at your place.

I gotta go home.

Wow, you two...

You're always fighting like cats and dogs.

It's weird.

My hair?

Nothing. I just wanted to try it out.

Mao...

What's with that hair?

It looks really bad on you.

You shouldn't do your hair like that at school, either.

It's totally not cute at all.

I'm going home.

Bye.

My dad's always telling me stuff like that.

...

I... I know.

...

See you later, Mao-chan!

I look like my mom, and it's not cute.

I heard that boys act mean to the girls they like.

Like what?

Dai-chan, I know stuff, you know.

Mao!

I'm h—

Oh, Magyo.

What's up? Going home already?

Wh-who does that?!

Don't be silly!

Well, did I get it right?

That's not it at all.

Th-

Then bring it here.

I have a box lunch!

You're just gonna be alone at home, right?

We'll eat together.

Have dinner with us.

Yeah.

Hm?

SWOOSH

POKE POKE

Did you do this by yourself, Mao?

Oooh.

You were gonna tell me it looks bad on me!

Was not!

Why'd you take it out?

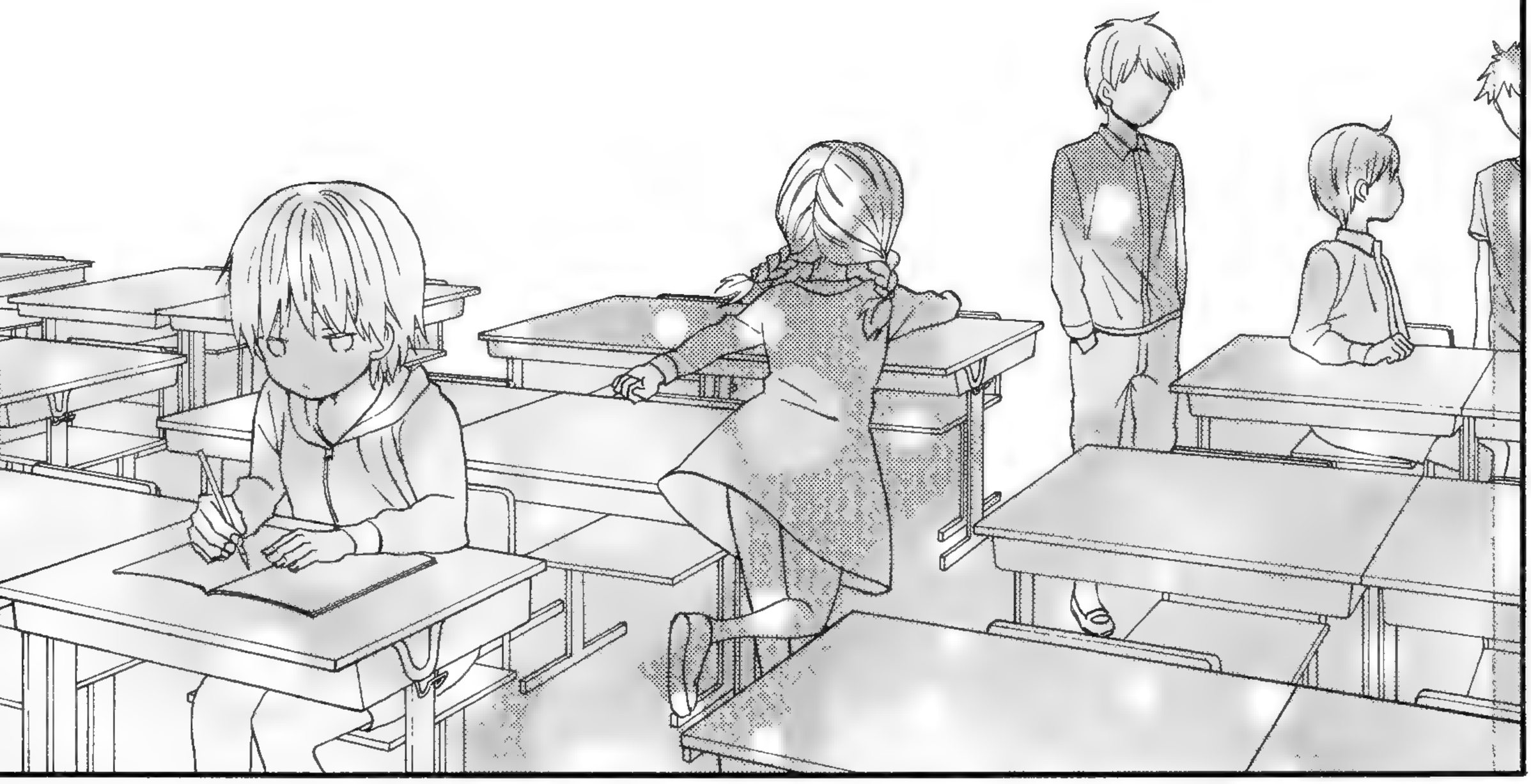
It was really cute.

Don't say stuff you don't mean. I can tell!

...a braid in her hair at school again.

...never wore...

From then on, Mao...



The way you feel when someone...

...returns the toy they've taken away from you.

...my parents died.

One rainy day...

...always brings back the memories of that day.

That very particular scent...

I've hated rain ever since that day.

My brother, dry-eyed.

My sister, his polar opposite.

HH

FSHHHHH

000

FWIP

5:h

HH

P

FSHHHHH

!!!

...Mao just stayed there with me.

Without a word...

Dai-chan...

Wanna take a break?

No one but me knows what that umbrella shielded me from.

It wasn't just the rain.

Thanks, Auntie.

I'll leave your midnight snack here.

And so that I could someday repay their kindness.

...so I could make a place for myself.

I worked as hard as I possibly could...

Right after that, I was moved over to my uncle's house.

It's not like...

My eyesight is so much worse on rainy days.

I didn't have the courage to do it.

I hadn't yet come to terms with the reality that they were gone.

...I don't want to live with Hina and Hiro.

But returning to that house...

...without our parents?

Mao? That little shrimp?

Why's she living at our place?

Is she dating Hiro?

It was the spring of my second year of high school when that ridiculously stupid message came from my brother. "Mao's started to live at our place."

Tell Hiro-kun we say hi.

I couldn't even picture her face.

Hmm? Scouting colleges?

Going to visit the grave?

To be honest, I'd forgotten about Mao almost completely.

TAP
ぱ。
TAP
た
ぱ。
た
TAP
ぱ。
た
ぱ。
た
TAP

CREAK
キィ

I couldn't remember her face at all, but...

...I knew her...

Ah! Is that you, Daiki?

...when I saw her...

...so well that it surprised me.

Who else would I be?

It seems like you got a lot smaller, Mao.

I couldn't stay an elementary school student forever.

You've really grown up! I didn't recognize you!

What are you thinking, Hiro?

And now she's living with my brother?!

HMPH

I'll make some.

Oh, you want tea?

Yes.

Is Hiro at work?

I remember where the tea is kept.

Sigh.

How'd she get so pale?

Why'd she grow out her hair?

She's basically become a woman!

What's with all this?

GRRRRR

Don't bother.

It's fine.

She works hard to make her own way.

But... If I had to explain Mao in one phrase, I'd say...

...she works hard.

Are you wearing earplugs?!

Stop trying to make dinner!

It's gonna reek in here!

All the time.

Constantly.

Every single day.

*Welcome Home Daiki

We worked hard.

Gotta celebrate a new member of the household!

NOD NOD

ガ" ク" ク"

Don't fall asleep, you two!

Eat every bite of that food!

Gross.

You idiots, staying up all night for this.

And plus, what's with these decorations?

Even here, at this house.

...I became able to laugh again.

At some point...

Congratulations!

Don't try to drag me into your sleep-deprived mood.

Don't talk about it like I'm a newborn baby.

Good idea.

Wanna draw on him?

Is Hiro sleeping?

Shrimpy, little Mao...

Mao...

Somehow, without warning...

Deep in
my heart.

...there
she was.

I ain't goin' there.

Not at all.

We'll go to the same school.

Gonna be tough, this time of year.

Naka-mura, you transferrin' out, for real?

What're you sayin'?

Nakamura... A Kansai accent's too weird comin' from you. Cut it out.

Then have your plans for college changed, or any-thing?

I'll be fine, even though we're going to be starting to prep for entry exams soon.

Oh, it's a step down from here.

Where you trans-ferrin' to?

The only reason I ain't been doin' it is 'cause I been stubborn, so I figured I should start up sooner 'r later.

Well, it's not like it's a bad school.

You gonna be okay?

And there are some good prep schools there, too. I'll be fine.

Anyway, that college thing was a joke. We're goin' to the same school.

Why now?! Seriously, y'sound gross!

For Mao...

Local sake for Hiro?

Maybe sweets would be better...

Oh, right.

I should buy some souvenirs...

Can I give my stuff away as souve-nirs?

Hmph.

I bet Mao would like that Czech cartoon DVD.

This is art!

Weird-looking?!

How's the packin' going?

I won't be sad to see the last of your weird-lookin' DVDs, that's for sure.

Is that so? Sorry 'bout that. I just don't get it.

I bought loads of 'em!

Take these with ya, they're charms!

The more charms, the luckier you are, I always say!

Isn't it a little too early for exam charms?

And why so many?

Dai-chan!

TAP

TAP

TAP

TAP

Aw, c'mon!

Otoba.

Ya left your dishes on the table, didn't ya? Go clean 'em up.

安産御守

交通安全御守

ぼけ封じ御守

If only she were a li'l bit more responsible.

*Right to left: Protection against Traffic Accidents, Safe Childbirth, Protection against Idiocy.

...!!

I was hopin' to get you two hitched and make you our son for real.

Now don't look so surprised!

Auntie... I...

Now what's all that bowin' for?

And payin' us back... how?

I will pay you back someday.

Money?

We don't need none of that.

Don't be stupid.

I will.

Thank you.

I don't have the words to express...

...how grateful I feel.

The best way to pay us back is for you to keep goin' on the path you believe in, okay Dai-chan?

But it'd also be nice if you'd think of us a little, time to time.

Okay, you like 'em, you hate 'em, whatever.

I just wanna meet whoever got you to change your mind.

Gave you th' courage to go home.

I told you, that's not it!

Jus' let us meet the person you like someday, yeah?

I refuse to tell anyone it was her!

Shut up! That's all behind me!

You're secretly a big wimp, after all.

But...

If you wanna take a breather, come on down-stairs.

I made up some cake for ya.

Mao.

I want to see her.

Damn it.

9月

Daiki comes back on the 25th of next month!

日	月	火	水	木	金	土
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 ✕	16 ✕	17 ✕
18 ✕	19 ✕	20 ✕	21 ✕	22 ✕	23 ✕	24 ✕
25 ✕	26 ✕	27 ✕	28 ✕	29	30	

Sure, but having a staring contest with the calendar won't make time go any faster.

It's because it's one step closer to the final form of the Nakamura family!

9月

It'll be a while until Daiki's back.

You think staring at the calendar is gonna make you feel any better, Mao?

Come to think of it, where's Daiki going to be going to school?

What?! Are you two keeping secrets?

I didn't ask.

Huh?! Didn't anybody tell you, Mao?!

He's going to the same school as you.

I thought I already told you, actually.

It wasn't supposed to be a secret.

I told you.

The same school as you.

What?

You're pretty smart, too, Mao.

He told me there aren't many schools taking applications for transfer students.

But Daiki's super smart...!

WHAAAT?!

You don't have to call a guy out like that.

I can easily imagine Daiki making fun of Oda-kun, actually!

You don't have to go that far.

He's going to snicker at Chi-chan because she has a thing for Oda-kun!

Sure you can.

He's a high school student, too.

I— I can't even imagine it...!

The same school as Daiki...

What do I do, Wakaba?

I see...

Hmmm. So that Chi-chan girl has a thing for Oda-kun.

Ooh, the first strategy meeting in a while.

...

FWUF

FWUF

So Mao and Daiki will be at the same school, the same job, the same house...

Let's hide Oda-kun.

Well, I was joking.

I see...

Right, Croquette.

...

What's that about...?

They pay well, and I like it there.

Mao.

Change your job.

You little...! Do you want me to work myself to death?!

You'd make a great commander...

What if you worked there, too?

You were the one who lied and told Daiki this was going to be a tutoring job?!

Huh?!

*Civil War

...he might not have been lying.

I guess that means that when Daiki said he was tutoring...

I guess it was for the sake of your family restaurant, but that was pretty cold of you, Aoi-kun!

It's true, he probably wouldn't have come if you'd told him it was a bar and restaurant.

I see...

Under-stood!

Motomiya-san! Motomiya-san, you have a guest!

What was that about, Hiro?

Don't tell me he decided to come work here, after all.

What about dying of overwork?

Hiro?

Huh? I told them we were closing, so maybe they went home?

Hm?

Whither?

See you later!

See you later!

Bye, see you later!

Later!

Oh, right, Hiro.

CLICK カシ

What was that about? He didn't text.

Excuse me!

Worked hard again today...

My first paycheck is coming soon, so I should work even harder!

...san.

Radical...

I wanted to text you, but I just couldn't think of what to send...

I'm so sorry I waited here for you...!

And besides, I wanted to talk to you face-to-face.

...I have to talk to you.

Kukai-san...

story 22

To Each Their Own Path

*Civil War

戦国

I just really had to talk to you...

I'm sorry I forced you into this.

To, um, Nakamura-san...?

He might be staying over at work today. This is the busy season.

KSH KSH カサ カサ

Excuse me, I have to send a text sayin I'm going to be late.

Also, I told him I'd be coming to see you, so it should be okay.

Oh, I see.

...

Waaah, she's texting him to say she'll be late.

Aah... I'm still going to send a text to Hiro.

TAKKA TAKKA カチカチカチ

Aaaah!
I really hate that Radical-san knows all these things about Hiro that I don't know! And I hate myself for hating it!

Y-you did...?

Graaah! It's just like she said...!

受信メール

From Hiro

Subject

Sorry, I'm probably going to stay overnight at work today. You're having dinner with Sugimoto-san, right? Don't be out too late.

It's about your novel, Kukai-san.

Um...

I'm gonna yell at Hiro in my head! I hate you, stupid Hiro!!

And how I lied... and said I wrote it.

Y-yes.

A-are you okay...?

I'm so sorry I said that!

BAM

...if I said I wasn't being selfish, too, it would be a lie.

I knew you didn't want the fact that you wrote the novel to be revealed, but...

That was my ulterior motive.

I thought that if I took the identity of "Kukai-san"...

...maybe he'd start to pay attention to me.

And when Nakamura-san and I would talk about the novel, he was always so excited about it.

...but she cares about Hiro so much that she'd lie.

She's such an honest person...

I'm always day-dreaming about civil war generals, and all.

I have creepy habits, too, so I won't judge.

Even just with these chopsticks and plates.

So excited...? You're so dumb, Hiro, ugh.

Hiro's got some creepy habits.

We're two peas in a pod.

Actually, I'm always thinking about putting my fantasies into novels and making them world-famous...

I'm very sorry.

Please give me some time...

...to confess everything to him.

I really wanted to tell Nakamura-san the truth...

...and explain to him why I told a lie like that.

But the longer I went on without saying anything, the more I couldn't say anything at all.

I just think that I'd really like it if I could be the one...

...to make him happy.

...I'm not Hiro's girlfriend, you know.

And nobody has the right to tell anybody else how to feel.

DUNN

Charge ahead!

I won't use your novel to try to get close to him, so don't worry!

W-well then, I'm not going to hold back anymore! I'm going to charge ahead!

Kukai-san...

And he may already know how I feel about him, anyway...!

NGH

カーン

He didn't realize at all?!

He was like that with me, too.

Do your best?!

D-do your best...

But Hiro is pretty dense, so he probably hasn't figured it out yet.

ガーン

DUNN

He refused, though.

When I was drunk and he took me home, I invited him in.

But... I've been pretty obvious about it. Are you sure he wouldn't have realized...?

There's a point at which a person just starts being aggressively dense.

...

But when I just said I liked him, he had this look of complete shock on his face.

Thinking back to that time I told him I liked him and took it back, I'm not sure if I was really in love with him.

Oh, don't worry, I've been frustrated from the very beginning.

Oh, no, I'm starting to get kind of frustrated!

Well, I guess that's what you get when you're in love.

We share our time...

We share the same feelings...

If you are speaking of Masamune, his menu includes a new item.

I'm starting to get kind of hungry.

Really ?!

Kukai-san, you went into work mode.

Can I order the Ma-kun menu?

But no matter how much we share...

...share a real smile with her.

...I just can't...

...somehow...

If only we didn't like the same person.

I really think...

...that things would be so much different between us.

Good morning!

Morning!

G-good morning, Chi-chan!

SMILE

SMILE

Morning!

...

...

I'm fine, okay?

It hurts, sure, but I'm doing just great.

Hm?

Look, Mao...

I'm doing so well that I'm thinking about how I have to just keep moving forward, and then someday I can fall in love again!

Yeah.

Hiro-san's bro-ther?

Hmmm. Well, Hiro's brother is going to be transferring into our school soon. I could introduce you to him, I guess.

Yeah! And if you know anybody, please introduce me to them!

Fall in love again?

Glasses, huh?

He's sarcastic, but he's got good taste!

Yeah, he's the type of guy who looks good in glasses, and he's super smart!

Contacts, huh?

He wears them at work, so it's fine!

If you don't like glasses, I can have him wear contacts!

Actually ...

...I've never met Hiro-san, have I?

You don't have to go that far!

They're the only two I know

Actually, I've never introduced you, huh?

Hasn't he sent you a selfie?

I'll do that! Maybe you can fall in love with him instead!

...

Croquette is just so cute, he kinda fades into the back-ground.

Wait, all of these are of the dog?! I can't see anything from the neck up! Now I'm getting suspicious!

Cuuute!

So cuuute!

PFH

Today's actually Hiro's day off, Chi-chan. He's home...

Oh.

That's harsh, Mao!

Ha ha ha!

Oda-kun.

G-

SQUEEZE

Good morning!

Morning.

Oh...

They usually don't come in at this time of year.

Mao just told me.

Did you hear? There's going to be a transfer student soon.

Maybe you shouldn't try! Go hide!

Maybe I'll have a chance to make a guy friend!

Shut up! I'm totally making him my friend!

I wasn't talking about your grades.

You're so dumb no one wants to be your friend.

I'm not that dumb.

Why?

I wonder if she's really given up on Oda-kun.

Chi-chan's acting normal.

Well, see you later.

...nothing even happened.

He's acting like...

Oda-kun, too...

Chi-chan...

How'd I do?

Was I acting as casual as he was?

Even though I know he's already hurting...!

Oda-kun...

He's trying to make it so no one gets hurt.

...I wonder if we can ever be friends again.

SQUEEZE
ギュッ

I just know I can stop liking him!

I felt like Chi-chan's tears...

...were telling me everything...

...about how she felt.

Why...

...did I ever think for a minute that she could give up on Oda-kun...

...just like that?

Even for a minute.

BAM

!!

Daiki's coming home soon!

I gotta have Chi-chan put money down on that haunted apartment we looked at!

Jobs are amazing ...!

I... I'm... totally rich!

He must have sensed my big windfall...

Speak of the devil, a text from Hiro.

I'm gonna hand over some money today and give him a shock!

Hiro's gonna be surprised ...!

Your stepmom told me she's coming for a visit today. What do you want to do? I plan on talking to her.
From Hiro
Subject
受信メール
ヒロ

I'm home.

Welcome home, Mao-chan.

ガタッ
TMP

...Mao.

Welcome home...

Won't you come home?

I've been talking to Nakamura-san, Mao-chan...

Wh...

...wants me to get out?

Hiro...

I'm fine with just a short stay.

One or two days.

Please, I just want you to think of the house as a place you can go home to.

Yes, I heard that.

But I want to get to know you better, Mao-chan.

But I want to live on my own.

I want you to get to know your sister.

Your dad...

...wants that, too.

...what about Dad?

But...

That's a lie.

I...

I'll come home.

But just for a little bit...

But I'm definitely going to need my dad to sign off on it.

If I can't go home, then I'll live on my own...!

...to try to come home.

...who wants someone like me...

...there's someone there...

And now...

Thank you, Mao-chan.

Thank you so much.

...for something as simple as going home?

Why does she want to thank me so much...

I wonder what she's feeling...

I'm making her worry about me.

...in that house?

What are things like...

Hiro, too.

If I'm gonna live on my own...

...I have to get a parent's signature.

So I'll go home.

One step forward.

That's great, Mao.

Here.

Oh, right. Hiro.

But either way, I'm getting rejected.

More talk about living on your own?

Even after she came to see you?

What is this?

...

It's amazing that she cares so much about me, even though I'm not related to her.

I mean, I get it.

Your dad pays all that.

I don't need it!

バシッ
PAF

Room and board.

I'm working hard!

Mao!

...

I keep making you...

...and my stepmom worry about me.

...Okay, then. I'll put it in my savings for an apartment.

...so I can feel up to facing my dad.

I'll work as hard as I have to...

So that I can feel ready to face Hiro.

But...

...if I still can't make it work...

...I'll live on my own.

You don't want us to worry...

You don't want to bother us...

Mao.

That's what being together is all about, you know?

But even if you feel that way...

...we're still going to be taking care of you and worrying about you.

It's okay to let us worry about you.

That's not going to change even if we don't share anything and you live all on your own.

If you hadn't pushed me, I'm sure I wouldn't have been able to tell Hina and Daiki how I really felt.

After all...

It's all because you worried about me.

Then, I helped Hiro?

So...

I'm so happy.

I'm going to keep working hard, just like you.

Thanks, Hiro. Just knowing that makes me feel better.

Okay.

So, why do I feel so upset?

It's great that Mao's making progress.

Right.

I'm gonna go change!

Tonight's my night to make dinner!

...that someday Mao would leave this house.

I knew from the start...

I mean...

...always knew that.

I...

story 23

A Brief Trip Home

...morning!♡

Good...

Come on in.

C-

I've heard so much about you from Mao, so I'm excited to finally meet you.

No worries, come in!

Sorry! I just wanted to meet you so badly that I forced her to let me come over out of the blue today.

Two schoolgirls at once...! Should I feel overwhelmed?

Since I don't know what's going to happen then.

I wanted her to meet him before I went home and before Daiki came back.

Oh, I bought this!

So you guys have known each other since Mao was in grade school, huh?

Chi-chan's come to hang out at Hiro's place.

Even though this house isn't mine.

I feel like I'm having her over at my own house.

...feels kind of strange.

Having a friend over at Hiro's house...

Stop being off in your own little world!

Was it rude to invite her?

Whoa! She's seriously dis-mantling me with her eyes! Mao, help!

How much do you make doing that? I have no idea!

INTENSE

うーん

Wow... So that's what you do...

うーん

INTENSE

PAFF

ベシ

PAFF

I guess he's different from the boys in our class.

I guess he's grown-up. I'm used to him, so I don't see it.

Like how?! Tell me!

So that's a 24-year-old...

H-Hiro-san's so much more grown-up than I thought...

Does he have a car? Have you ridden along with him?

Hiro can't drive.

Nope.

What else is adult... Ummm... Does he drink?

Yep.

Does he smoke?

Aaaah! A real adult!

You only got one hit!

You sure do! Even your expressions are the same.

What?! No, we don't!

And you two sort of have the same vibe about you now.

He sure lets you talk super casual with him, though.

I bet that only happened after you moved in.

I know you want to gush about him, Mao!

Every-one's tall here. Even his brother!

But man, he's so tall. Like this!

Yeah...

He is.

Oh, no...! Talking so nice about Hiro makes me so happy I'm smirking all over...!

He seems really nice, too.

You should probably get some condoms, you know.

Though Hiro probably has some.

Cut it out, Chihiro!

L-Lemme see!

Don't hide that smirk!

It's not like that!

Aah...

Living with the guy you like... I'm jealous...

?!

That does sound awful.

You've been talking about stuff like that a lot, Chi-chan.

Well, y'know, I'm just interested! You are too, I bet.

I-i-it's not like that at all!

Whatever! I'm just worried about you, is all!

This girl in my class had an abortion a while ago.

It's expensive, her parents found out, and it sucked.

She didn't know if it was from her boyfriend or somebody else.

WHAAAAAT?!

I just really want to try doing it!

What's it like?!

I never thought about it.

FLOP ストッ

What, really?! But you want to touch him, right?

Look, I'm telling you, we're behind!

ビシッ POINT

Everybody else is already doing it!

UGHHH...

POKE POKE つんつん POKE つん♡

You want to poke him, right...?

...

Don't touch me there!

THUMP

ガバ

Waaaah!

Even if you don't really want to, what if he comes at you and gets all up on you like this? You wouldn't be able to run away!

I'll come back later.

This is the kind of stuff high school girls talk about...

Th-

!!

KACHK

キ

ヤ

!!

God, whatever! I'm making tea!

SHING

You did hear!

Hear what?

Did you hear that?

Something wrong, Mao?

We don't! Forget everything you just heard!

I was just wondering if you wanted snacks.

?

Owwww! That hurts!

You should wait to do that stuff until after I leave!!

HIRO!

Daiki's going to be coming home soon, so I figured I'd better let you know sooner rather than later.

Schoolgirls have their minds in the gutter!

Wait, wait! It's not what it looks like!

A real busy week.

It's two days after you go home.

Right?

Daiki?

Well, that's good.

Just overnight, this time.

Wh—

Mao, you're going home?

You can do it, Mao.

Oh, really?

Thanks.

MOTOMIYA

One day in October ...

...I went back home for the first time in a while.

Should I say...

..."I'm home!"?

It's a weird thing to worry about.

Cute...! It's Hundred Eyes.

Yeah! Your dad told me you loved these.

Welcome home, Mao-chan.

These are your new house slippers.

I can do this.

I'm home!

Ha ha ha ha!

Dad...

D-

Ah ha ha!

You gotta be kiddin' me!

This guy's such an idiot.

I went all out!

Wow.

M-

Mao-chan, are you hungry? Let's eat.

You, too, honey!

...

...

Honey! We'll eat it up if you don't hurry!

Well, that's a feast.

Hmph.

Honey...

Yeah, I'm gonna eat in front of the TV.

...I can never feel like it's okay to live here.

Without him to tell me it's okay...

...who can tell me it's okay.

He's the only one...

Why?

Well, I should try to talk to him about living alone.

CLATTER カタッ

I need to talk to you.

Dad.

Once I find a place, will you give me permission?

But I'm still underage, so I need a parent's permission.

But I've been thinking I want to live alone.

Hiro's been helping me a lot at his place.

I'm not gonna let you live alone.

Absolutely not...!

Why...

...not?

Then...

...where am I supposed to live?

How dare you come here just to ask me...

... something like that!

Why did she do that?

TMP

ガラ…!

Honey, what's the matter?!

Mao-chan?

I'm going to bed!

KNOCK

(ν_ KNOCK

(ν~

What is it?

He doesn't usually drink so much at home.

Your dad just drank too much, I think.

I'm sorry.

Mao-chan.

Please keep it up.

Your dad...

...he may not look it, but he's always thinking about you.

...you can do it.

Mao...

I'll keep trying.

Oh, yeah.

FWIP

I should send Hiro a text saying I'm okay.

I bet he's worried.

What should I say?

Thank you.

CLK

CLK

CLK

CLK

Hiro, you suck.)`-´(

You suck most of all!

How dare you...

カチ CLK カチ CLK カチ CLK

受信メール

Hiro

You suck more, Magyo.

BZZ BZZ

受信メール

Hiro

You suck at hiding your feelings. It'll be okay.

Even though he sucks.

I want to see him.

...is going to be back in crybaby mode.

Looks like Mao...

I mean, I haven't really felt like that since right after our parents died.

KRSH フシュ

I wonder if it's because it's been so busy around here?

...I feel kind of lonely.

カリ KSH チャ

Been a while since I was home alone...

Hm?

What's that on your collar, Croquette?

I have Croquette and Wakaba-chan here.

And beer tastes good.

But still...

Did Mao put that on there?

Ugh, it's ugly.

Poor thing.

...these little signs of her presence.

...Mao's left...

...here and there...

At some point...

Whatever.

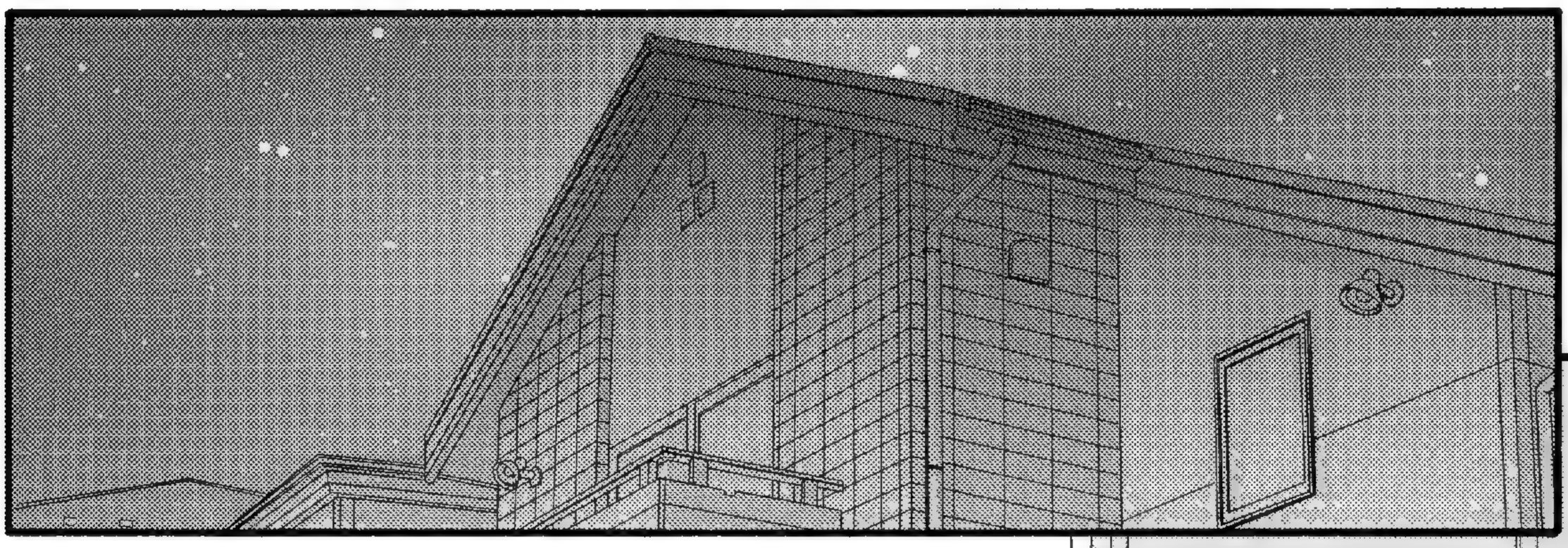
But still...

I wonder...

...missing me, too?

...over there...

Is Hiro...



...

How did it go?

Yup.

You can measure. Just don't mix it up, or it'll end up turning into a mess.

I'll help.

Are these snacks for Daiki's welcome home party?

Huh?

...go live on my own.

Well...

My dad told me he wasn't gonna let me...

What's that guy trying to do?

Didn't see that coming.

I totally thought he'd say yes right away.

You're still just a high schooler, right?

...

Oh, well... I wouldn't rush, then.

I really should go back home.

Yep. So I was thinking...

Just going back for a day or so like this is about all I can handle right now.

So I'll try, too, bit by bit.

But my stepmom is really trying for me.

Yeah.

...

It might not seem like much...

...but from my perspective, this was a really big step.

Just keep staying here...!

It's probably going to take my dad some time...

Until then, I'll probably end up having to stay here for a while...

Sorry.

But I can't say that.

You poured too much.

It's all over you.

Mph.

Hiro?

I'm the worst. What a contra-diction.

I want to cheer her on, but I also want to sabotage her.

Hiro?

What's wrong?

ギュッ

HUG

You'll get all floury.

...

Were you lonely?

Hm.

Don't care.

Even though I was always alone before you came.

Yeah, I was.

Weird, huh?

I'm a liar.

Tomorrow ...

...Daiki's coming back.

Yeah.

So you'll be fine.

I wasn't really lonely at all.

I wasn't lonely...

It's just that...

...Mao was gone.

That's all.

SMAK ちゅっ

...

PUSHH

BAP

Ow!

What was that for?!

That's what I wanna know.

Y-you looked really sad, is all!

That's why!

Wh—

Let me go, jerk!

Is that what you do when people look sad?

Huh.

Look at me.

How does it feel...

Now tell me.

...when someone does something like that to you?

Think carefully.

ちゆっ
SMEK

SLAP

Ow!

Payback, you jerk.

I have to go to the shrine!

That was sudden!

Sure did.

You started it.

You kissed me!

No way! You're more dangerous, anyway!

Why are you thinking about it?!

...

I'll go, too.

It's dan-gerous.

I screwed that one up.

'kay.

See you later!

12

SIGH

PHEW

What a relief.

Daiki

メッセージ

編集

Looks like I can catch the last train in. I should be there this evening.

Hm?

Daiki!

KACHK

カニョ

うーん
OHM

うーん
OHM

Just let me get through tonight ...!

This is the last night we're alone together...!

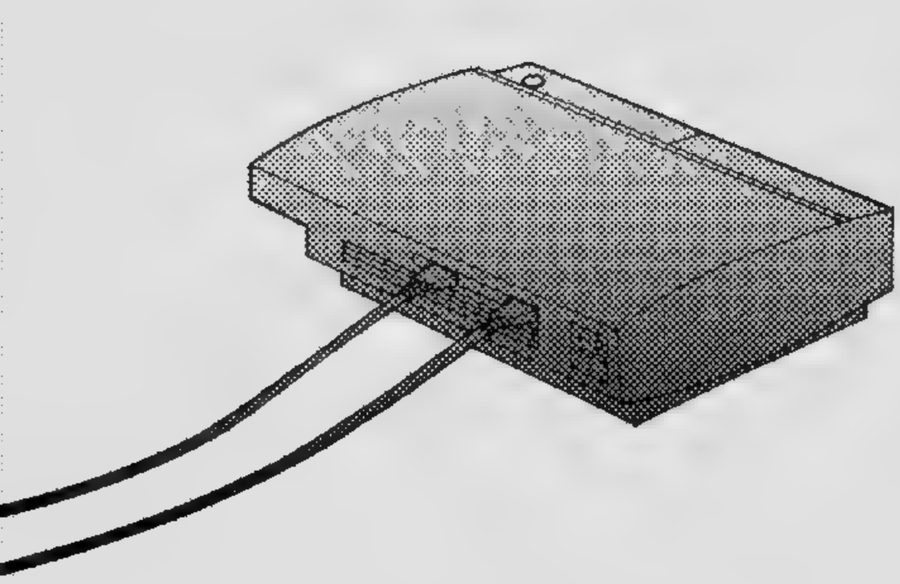
Wicked thoughts, please leave me.

What are you doing here?

Mao?

story 24

A New Life



Daiki?

I managed to make the last train. I thought I let Hiro know...

I thought you were coming home tomorrow?

Welcome home, Daiki.

Hiro?

He didn't say anything about it when I last saw him.

It's nothing. Let's go home.

...

What? I didn't hear you.

Hm.

I'm home.

SPARKLE

...Daiki!

Welcome home...

I'm home.

...

Also, I helped, so make sure you eat it all.

Do your best, Daiki. I won't have any. It's too sweet.

I got fired up because you were coming home.

What's all this? Why so many desserts?!

Am I being hazed?

What are you, a grandma? I can't eat all this!

...

PAF
ポン

Is that really enough to call it helping?

No worries. All she did was measure out the flour.

...

...

You don't know?

たTMP TMP たTMP たっ

D-Daiki, when do you start school?

FWIP

...

Day after tomorrow.

I'm excited.

Good night.

Well, I have school tomorrow, so I'm going to bed.

Night.

...

...

ヒタ

SQUISH

コロ

ROLL

コロ

ROLL

コロ

ROLL

コロ

ROLL

Aaaah!

I love Hiro too much!!

But they took me in at this house.

No, I can't!

SHIVER SHIVER

ブル ブル

I have to call Chi-chan and tell her...

It's too embar-rassing!

Maybe it's not good to do these things while they're letting me stay here.

...something like that!

How dare you come here just to ask me...

When will it be okay for me to go back there, I wonder.

...

That's why Daiki came back to him.

Hiro worked so hard...

...to get him to talk to me?

What can I say...

I have to be able to go home to that house.

Until then, I have to hold in my outbursts.

...I can tell Hiro how I feel again.

And then...

...but it'll be super sad to leave Hiro.

Still...

I know it's selfish.

And maybe I'm the worst for thinking this...

Mao...

...took a little trip back home.

She was going on and on about moving out on her own, but now she's starting to think about moving back home.

She says she's going back, but it sure looks like it's little by little so far.

...

Hmm.

Is she really going home?

Seri-ously?

But that's a good thing for Mao, right?

Huh.

...

Uhh.

Is that why Mao was acting weird?

Nothing, really?

No, not really.

Then what did you do to her, Hiro?

Hmmm.

...

What's with this tension?

Ooh.

Whoa!

VWISH

I see.

You'll be popular, at first.

Only at first?!

There aren't very many guys as tall as you at our school.

That's all? My height hasn't changed.

You're huge!

Is it their youth?!

They're shining!

This is what a high school couple is like...!

Ooh.

That's the pot calling the kettle black.

You're too blunt.

Ooh, what's this?

I know you're being sarcastic!

Your suit looks good on you, Hiro.

DING

DING

DONG

DONG

MURMUR

MURMUR

MURMUR

MURMUR

MURMUR

DUN

All right, take your seats.

What the...

Motomiya-san, you know Nakamura-kun, right?

Help him out if he has any trouble.

...heck?!

I never thought we'd be in the same class!

Now Oda-kun has nowhere to run! And Chi-chan's in trouble by proxy!

Did you mean to just think that?

What?! Why?!

I asked them to put us in the same class.

I just thought it'd make things go a lot more smoothly.

Hm, I guess you're right.

Yo.

So you know him, Motomiya?

Oh, nooo!

...Nice to meet you.

You're so tall.

ガッ

TMP

I'm Oda.

I've been in Motomiya's class since first year.

You can feel free to ask me anything you want.

Oh, I know Oda-kun seems spacey, but he's smart!

Oh, really?!

Well, I'm smarter!

Hey, Mao!

カチャ

CLATTER

Besides, he's super handsome!

Shouldn't your friends be girls?!

What? He's my friend.

So what is he?

WHISPER

Huh?

Hand-some? I guess so.

I forgot.

...

Daiki.

Did you really want to make friends with girls that badly?

I don't have many friends.

Why do you think that?!

Mao!

I'm here to hang out!

Chi-chan!

Hello.

Daiki.

Oooh!

So this is Hiro's infamous younger brother!

Nice to meet you! You can call me Chihiro.

She's so close.

STARE STARE STARE STARE

Wh— So you're his younger brother?

ZOOM

I thought you'd look a lot like Hiro-san, Daiki-kun.

But your hair's so light.

What's all this?

Yep.

And we know Mao is living at his house, so don't worry.

Both of you know about my brother?

Should you be saying that in front of me?

But I'm also so worried about you, living in a house with two guys!

Mao, I'm happy and embarrassed for you!

Oda-kun was kind of an accident.

An acci-dent?

Chi-chan is my best friend, so I told her.

You're a joke, so I'm calling you one!

What do you mean, clown?!

...

Wow... I guess Motomiya's life is sort of like a *shoujo* manga now...

I feel like my sister's got this one.

And I'm never sure when this clown will pop up.

...

...

Hm?

Mao, give me a tour around the school.

TMP

カ"ヨッ

Later.

My Point of view?

It's all right, I'd like to get a chance to see it from Mao's point of view first.

You can show me around later.

I'll go, too!

Ha ha ha...

It surprised me that he's in the same class as you and Mao.

...

I'm jealous. I wish I was in the same class as you guys.

Yeah.

It surprised me that he was Hiro's younger brother.

Why?!

Yeah.

But I'd be fine if it was just you in another class.

I hope we're all together in third year.

Just kidding.

Going back to my own class.

Later.

...

I still love him.

It's just no good.

I just want to see Oda-kun again.

So I'll be back in this classroom again soon.

I'm tired...

GRR イライラ

Though, actually, the randomness got cute after a while.

Enough with the bathrooms!

This is the third-floor bathroom.

I never thought she'd give me a detailed tour of every bathroom at school.

It seemed completely random.

They're in the same place on every floor, anyway!

FIRED UP

Kobe? That's totally crazy!

Kobe.

Oh, right. And this school has girls, so that's also pretty tiring.

What's crazy about it?

So, Nakamura-kun, where did you live before?

We just grew up together.

Aaah! Good!

Friends? No, not really.

Are you friends with Motomiya-san?

So, then, do you know if Motomiya-san is dating Oda-kun?

What is this, a pick-up spot?

Jeez, this is more than just annoying.

Oh, good!

OOH!

They're not dating.

...

Shut up! Why do I have to tell them whether or not you and Oda-kun are dating?

You won't be popular! Except at first!

I turned him down!

N-no way!

Don't tell me you are dating.

What?

It's a pick-up spot...!

It really is...

Ugh, my eyes hurt...

Daiki and Mao are at school now...

カタカタ TAKKA

カタカタ TAKKA

You've seemed so tense all day today...

Naka-mura-san?

I wonder how it's going...

FIDGET

FIDGET

TAP TAP TAP

Oh? Nakamura-san made those?

Yeah, he made too many treats to welcome him back home, and he brought the leftovers to work.

New school?

So your little brother came back?

Oh... Today's my brother's first day at his new school...

I have to eat them...! I have to eat them all...!

Handmade treats from Nakamura-san...

Whoops, the truth revealed.

Don't tell her that.

TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA

I... I wish someone could teach me.

Um... I'm pretty good at cooking, but I never really tried to bake before.

Thanks.

Um... They were really good...!

I really don't need any more people knowing about Mao being at my house...!

O o

ガーン DOOM

No way!

Ooh, I want to go to Nakamura's place, too!

Hawaii!

Guam!

Ha ha ha

Can't be overseas.

No cost to make a sug-gestion.

Hey.

Looks like we're taking requests on where to go for our corporate retreat this year.

Hm?

Is there anywhere you'd like, Sugimoto?

M-me?

Don't say London or Paris.

Sendai...

I want to go to Sendai...!

YEAH!

すーーしー！

If that's what Sugimoto-san wants!

Any objections, guys?

MURMUR

I see, hmm!

That's where Hina is.

If we are going to Sendai, I can see her.

Sendai ...

TAKKA TAKKA

カタカタ

キャハハ YAP YAP YAP

I'm home!

Welcome home.

SHINE

Don't look so emotional. It's creepy.

Yeah, creepy.

What?! How is it creepy?!

Don't just repeat it, Mao!

It was all pretty normal, really.

Was it? I guess that makes sense.

How was school?

You think it'll go well?

He managed to get along with Chi-chan and Oda-kun better than I thought.

I can get along with people.

Good... I'm relieved.

You're just a worry-wart, Hiro.

When Mao and I are alone together, things get pretty awkward.

Should I move seats?

You're too tall. It's hard to see the blackboard.

I'm so glad Daiki is here.

Above all, this house is getting brighter.

Now for Hina.

Yeah, creepy.

What're you smirking about. It's creepy.

...You two really are alike.

And then, we can all have a new life.

What are you doing in my room, Mao?

If nothing happened, why are you making that face?

N-nothing happened!

A little late for the serious expression.

...

That's just an excuse.

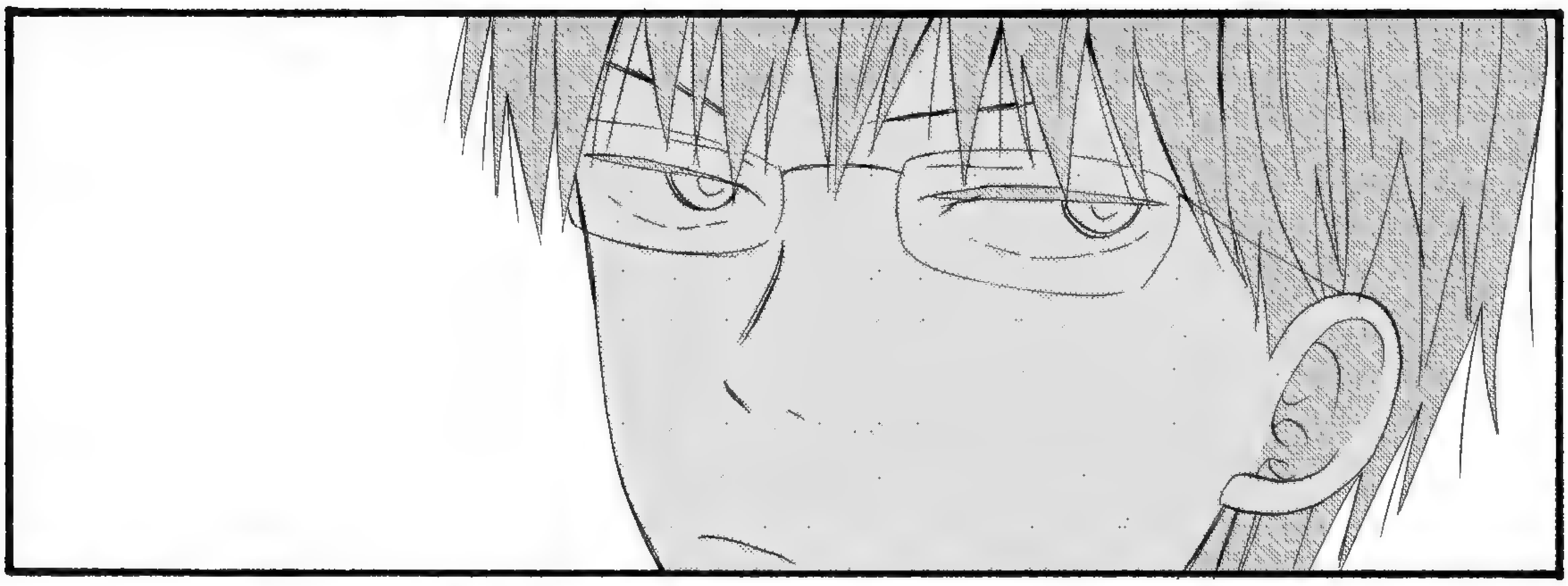
Did something happen with Hiro? Spit it out already.

I was thinking we could study together.

When I'm alone, I start to stress out.

Because I'm worried about how, when Hiro and I are together, all my feelings for him just start to explode.

It's nothing, really. Just...



I don't really mind.

Go ahead.

I-I'm sorry to talk to you about this, Daiki.

Hmph.

T-MP
カサッ

FWUMP

ストン!!

You want me to?!

To tell you how I like Hiro?

But he's your brother!

I'll just listen to you.

It's better than exploding, right?

Yeah...

It is, but still...

...

Well...

If you don't want to talk, that's fine.

'Cause I actually really don't want to hear this.

...

No, not well! It's nothing!

Oh.

You're so weird.

Do you have a crush on anyone?

Sure do.

I'm making my approach slowly.

Anyway, I'm not in a hurry.

I don't wanna tell you.

Mean.

Don't tell anyone.

I won't.

Someone in Kobe?

Oh!

Oooh!!

Hmmm.

Approach ...

You make it sound like a game.

Yep.

So don't worry about me.

Dark pas-sions?!

I'll dampen mine, too

FWSH

For now, we can study to dampen your dark passions.

Is this really second-year stuff?

What is this? I don't get it at all.

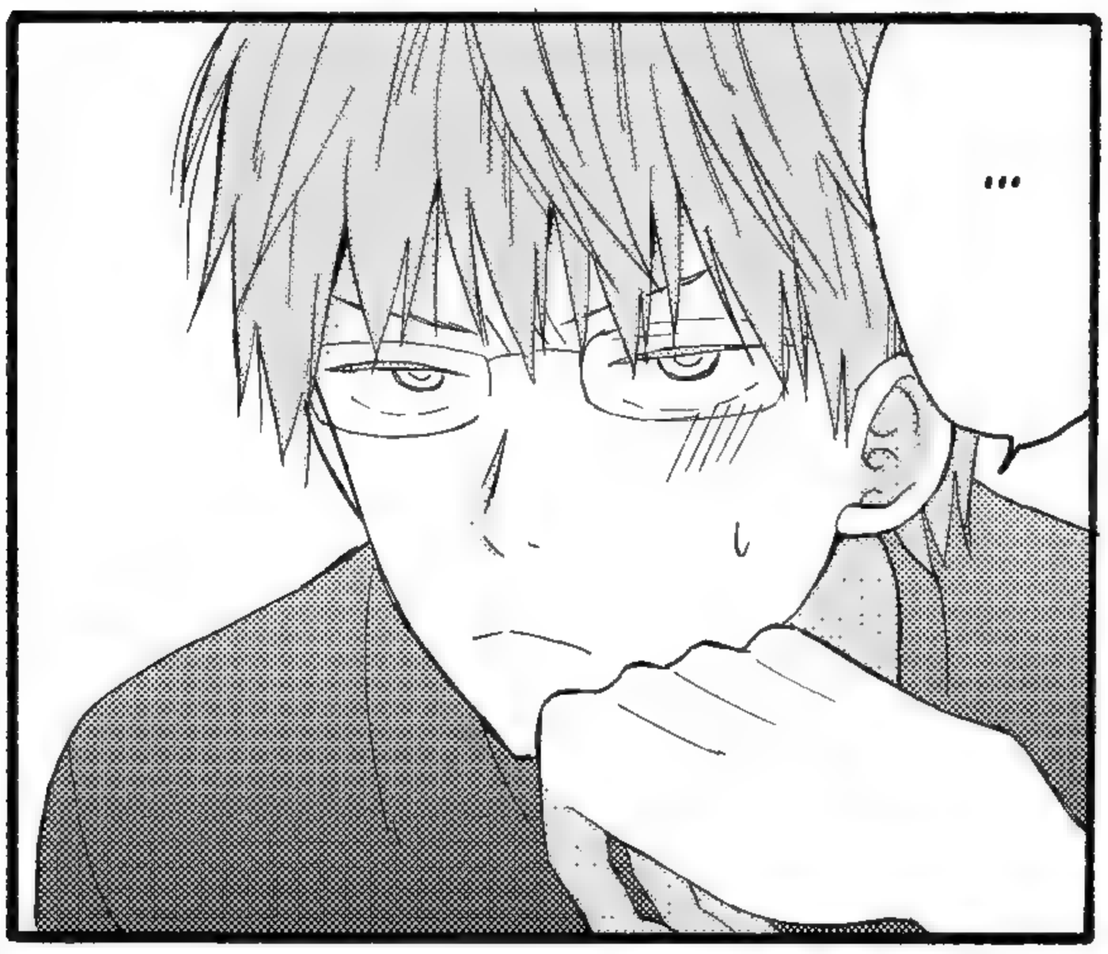
You, too, huh?

It must be tough for you.

SNORE

It is tough.

Real tough.



To be continued...

You're making too big a deal. It's not like we'll never see each other again.

Thank you for using the Shinkansen.

In a moment ...

EXTRA CHAPTER Farewell, Boyhood.

I thought this would happen, that's why I wanted to leave quietly at night.

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cry like this...

But...

But...

I made you this *bento* for the train. It's full of all your favorites.

Thanks...

Auntie.

?

...

You've gotten so big...

...they feel so far away.

And all those days you spent tryin' to hide your tears...

Feels like it was just yester-day.

You were close t' this tall when you came.

Feels like you bein' so tall is a dream.

TOO BIL RIL

And we'll be here!

...

I'll come back to visit.

C'mon cut it out with that.

RIL RIL

Dai-chan...

RIL

See you later.

RIL

RIL

Wh— Do what?

You can do it, Dai-chan!!

YAROOH YAROOH

You can do it, Dai-chan!!

RIL

SHF

Tons of layers, huh..

Jeez.

Embarrassing.

HEE HEE

HEE, HEE

ゴトゴトゴトゴト

CLATTER CLATTER

I bet Hiro's gonna have tons of food there when I get home, too.

How extravagant.

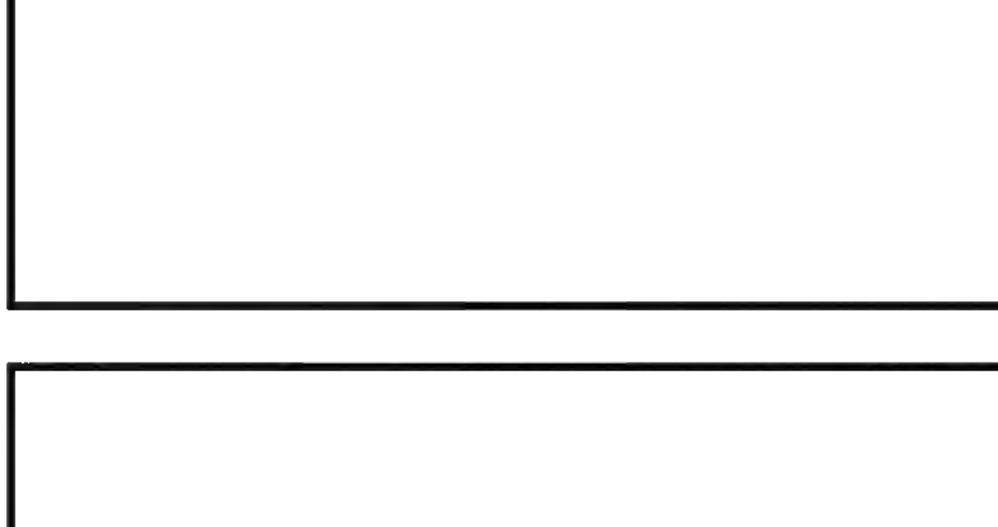
Now I have two different homes.

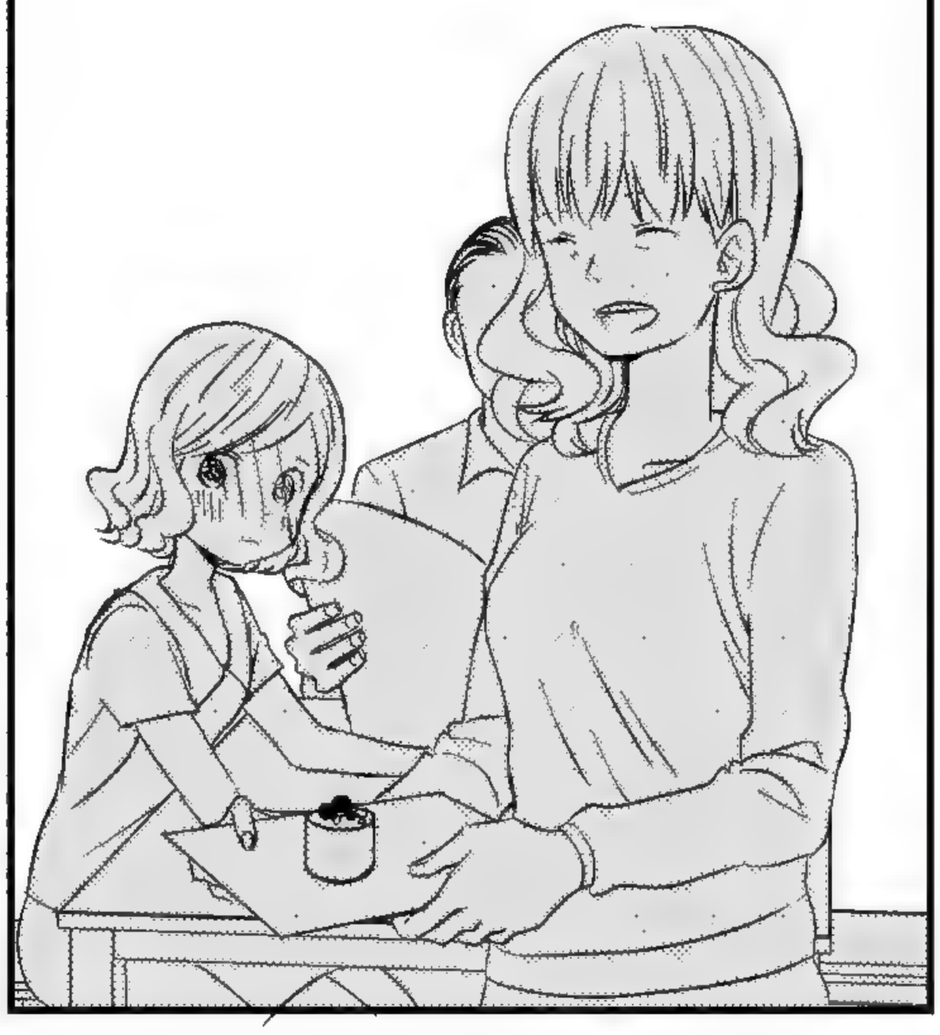
...it's because of that home...

But...

...that I have to go back to my real home.

I really can't find the words to express my gratitude for the home in Kobe.





End of extra chapter

Next volume

Announcement

All right!

Daiki has come home...

Sure do.

...and the duo has become a trio.

...

What are Hiro and Daiki's feelings towards Mao...?!

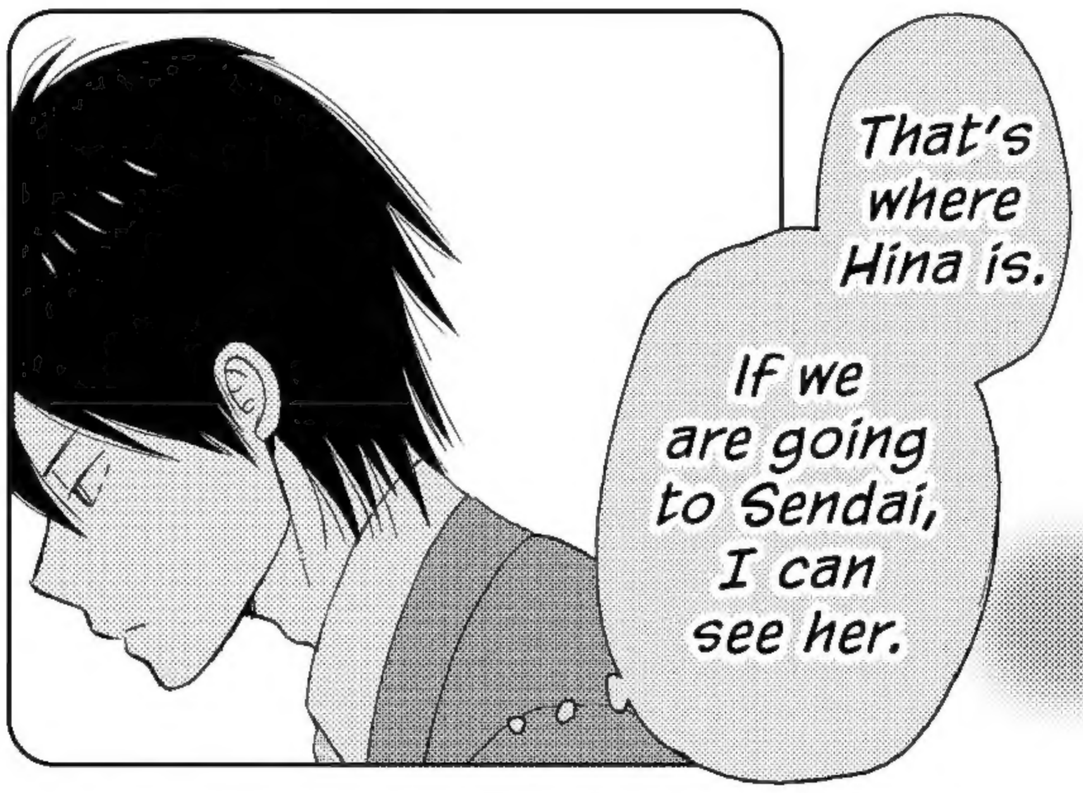
ヒ・タ

SQUISH

What will Mao do?!

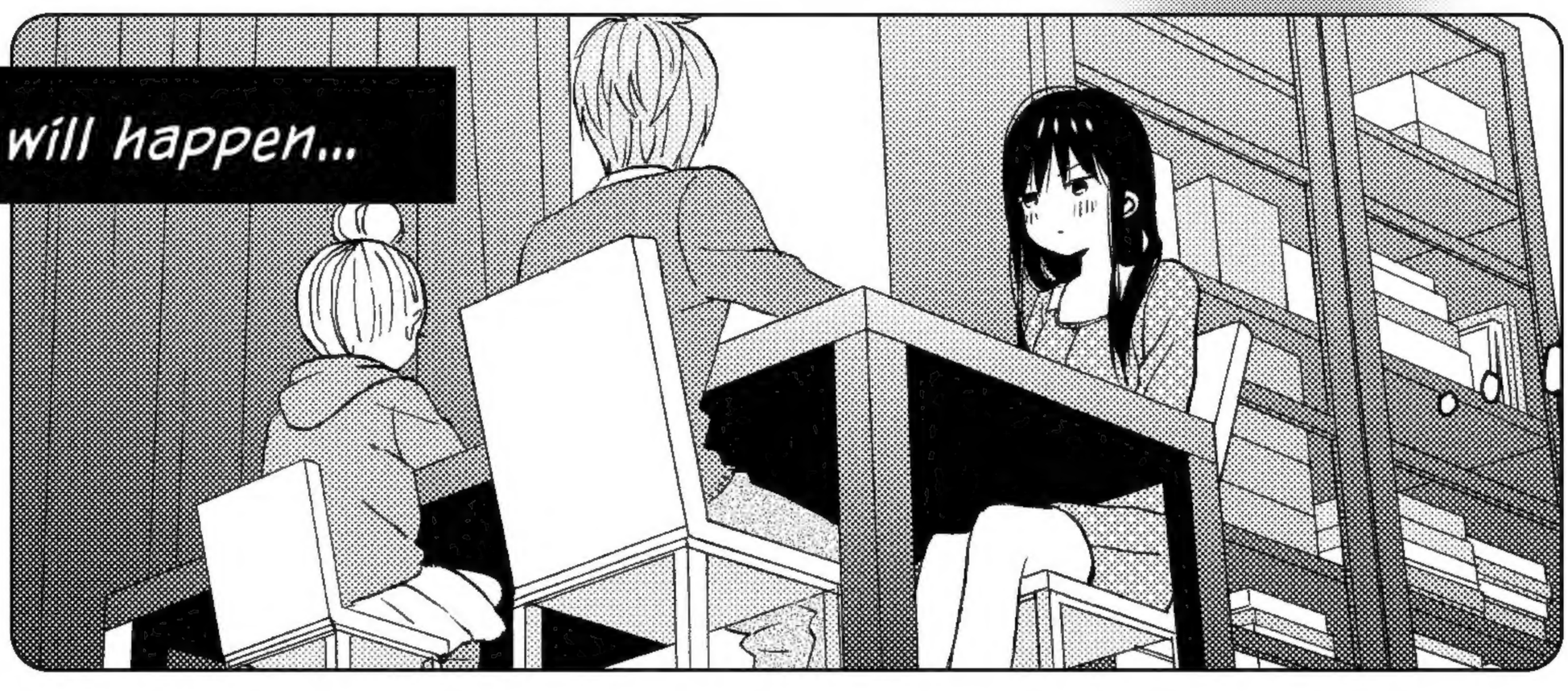
At the same time, the work retreat approaches...

Will Radical-san finally make her move?!



The Nakamura and Motomiya houses move slowly towards a new beginning.

What will happen...



...between Mao and Hiro?!

HOUSE of the SUN 7

Popular right now!

House of the Sun 6

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